

**RENAISSANCE ZONE AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES
November 29, 2011**

The Bismarck Renaissance Zone Authority met on November 29, 2011 in the 2nd Floor Conference Room in the City-County Office Building at 221 North 5th Street.

Authority members present were Dave Blackstead, Jim Christianson, Chuck Huber, George Keiser, Kevin Magstadt, Brenda Smith and Curt Walth.

Technical advisors Bruce Whittey and Jeff Ubl were present.

Staff members present were Jason Tomanek, Carl Hokenstad, and Kim Lee.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Blackstead called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

DISCUSSION OF PROGRAM INPUT MEETINGS

Mr. Tomanek reported that the stakeholder input sessions had been conducted by City staff consisting of Carl Hokenstad, Kim Lee and Jason Tomanek. Mr. Tomanek stated that the responses were collected by staff and distributed to the Authority members for review. Mr. Tomanek continued by saying that there were common themes that were offered by many of the community stakeholders. The re-occurring themes included comments relating to the challenges of developing and redeveloping property in the downtown area, comment relating to the challenges associated with parking in downtown Bismarck; added costs with redeveloping historic structures and aged or vacant property. On multiple occasions, individuals stated that the appropriate property had not presented itself or been available. Mr. Tomanek said that a re-occurring comment from developers outside the downtown area was that they have chosen to locate outside the downtown area because they wish to provide parking for their customers on-site as opposed to relying on available street parking spaces or the parking garages.

Mr. Walth commented that the Renaissance Zone Authority should formulate a response and report that would be delivered to the Board of City Commissioners that addresses to the stakeholder comments.

Mr. Keiser suggested that the Renaissance Zone Authority consider the responses from the stakeholders and move forward with recommendations on the Renaissance Zone Development Plan. Mr. Keiser noted that it would be important to speak to the common themes raised by the stakeholders.

Mr. Huber stated that the stakeholder comments do not offer support for amending the structure or the workings of the Renaissance Zone.

A brief discussion was held regarding any changes to the five year property tax exemption afforded by the Renaissance Zone program. It was noted that one consideration would be to

amend the five year property tax exemption to provide for a graduated decrease in exemptions over the five year period. The general consensus of the Authority is to leave the program in place without any recommended changes to the property tax exemption incentive.

Mr. Whittey commented that the goals to bolster and increase housing opportunities have not yet been realized and any incentives available to encourage market-rate housing in downtown Bismarck should remain in place.

MOTION: Mr. Christianson made a motion to recommend that the five year property tax exemption period remain as is and that graduated property tax exemptions not be implemented or considered at this time. Mr. Keiser seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Walth stated that the question relating to, “How important is a healthy downtown” that was asked of both groups of stakeholders, should be included with the report to the Board of City Commissioners. Mr. Walth continued by saying that the responses are important elements; he noted that each of the stakeholders’ comments supported the idea of a healthy and vibrant downtown as critical to the success of the community. Mr. Walth closed by saying that it should be noted that not one individual or group said that the Renaissance Zone Program is unfair or a disadvantage to doing business outside the downtown area.

After discussing the information provided by staff, the general consensus of the Renaissance Zone Authority was to develop recommendations for the future of the Renaissance Zone Program in Bismarck and provide the recommendations to the Board of City Commissioners.

Jason Tomanek was directed to develop an executive summary that encapsulates the overall synopsis of the stakeholder comments. Mr. Tomanek indicated that a draft of the executive summary would be prepared by the next meeting.

Mr. Keiser stated that the goals and objectives portion of the Development Plan should be addressed and updated. Mr. Keiser added that it is important to address what can be done to accomplish the goal of increased market-rate housing, condominium development projects and the implementation of a Quiet Rail Zone.

It was decided that an additional special meeting would be necessary to discuss the goals and objectives. The general consensus of the Authority was to schedule a special meeting on December 7, 2011 at 3:30 pm.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Blackstead adjourned the meeting of the Bismarck Renaissance Zone Authority at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jason Tomanek
Recording Secretary

David Blackstead
Chair